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(11) EP 1 107 377 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
13.06.2001 Bulletin 2001/24

(51) Int Cl.7: H01R 13/17

(21) Application number: 00126995.0

(22) Date of filing: 08.12.2000

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE TR
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

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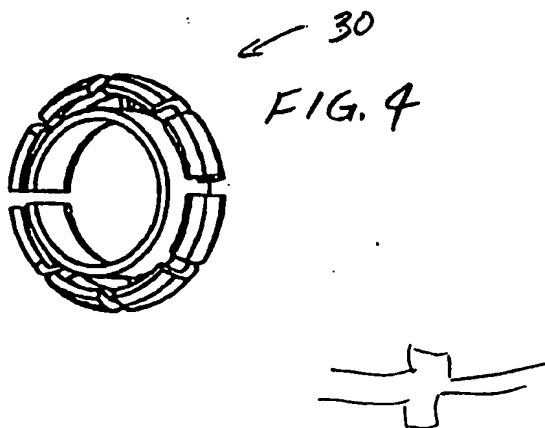
(30) Priority: 10.12.1999 US 458082

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(54) Clip ring for an electrical connector

(57) The present invention is directed to an integrally formed clip ring made out of a conductive resilient material such as beryllium copper. The clip ring is used for retaining a male member and a female member of an electrical connector and for forming a ground circuit between the male member and the female member of the electrical connector. The clip ring of the present invention fully engages the outside diameter of the male retaining groove and the inside diameter of the female retaining groove simultaneously. Advantageously, this

eliminates the potential for discontinuities in a ground circuit in a vibrational environment. The clip ring includes an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall where the outer wall has a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots. The outer wall has a first end circumferentially spaced from a second end wherein when the clip ring is compressed a first end and a second end are brought into contact with each other. In this manner, a complete 360° contact is maintained when the male member and the female member are fully engaged.



EP 1 107 377 A1

Description

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to clip rings, and more particularly to clip rings for electrical connectors.

Background of the Invention

[0002] Depicted in Figures 1A and 1B is a simple "C" ring that fits in a groove on a male member of a mated pair of electrical connectors. When the male member and the female member are being engaged, this "C" ring is compelled to close into the groove on the male member so that the inside diameter of the female member may pass around it. Once the male member and the female member are fully engaged there is a concentric undercut groove in the female member that the "C" ring on the male member engages by springing back and partially engaging the outside diameter of the retaining groove of the male member and the inside diameter of the retaining groove of the female member.

[0003] The problem with the "C" ring depicted in Figures 1A and 1B is that the "C" ring can only touch a portion of the inside diameter of the female connector and a portion of the male connector simultaneously. The "C" ring can rattle in a vibrational environment causing a discontinuity in the circuit. In addition, the insertion withdrawal forces cannot be accurately tuned to the needs of the user. Accordingly, a need exists for a clip ring in which the insertion forces can be accurately predicted, and in which a complete electrical circuit is completed when the male member and the female member are fully engaged.

Summary of the Invention

[0004] It, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a clip ring in which the insertion withdrawal forces can be kept within a narrow band.

[0005] Another object of the present invention is to provide a clip ring which provides an excellent grounding path completing a ground circuit between a male and female connector when the male member and the female member are fully engaged.

[0006] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a retaining clip in which the outside diameter and inside diameter of the clip extend for a fully 360° contact with both the female member and the male member when the male member and the female member are fully engaged.

[0007] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a clip ring in which the withdrawal and insertion forces can be tuned to a great degree by varying the material thickness and beam length of the fingers of the clip ring.

[0008] The present invention is directed to an integral-

ly formed clip ring made out of a conductive resilient material such as beryllium copper. The clip ring is used for retaining a male member and a female member of an electrical connector and for forming a ground circuit between the male member and the female member of the electrical connector. The clip ring of the present invention fully engages the outside diameter of the male retaining groove and the inside diameter of the female retaining groove simultaneously. Advantageously, this eliminates the potential for discontinuities in a ground circuit in a vibrational environment. The clip ring includes an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall where the outer wall has a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots. The outer wall has a first end circumferentially spaced from a second end wherein when the clip ring is compressed a first end and a second end are brought into contact with each other. In this manner, a complete 360° contact is maintained when the male member and the female member are fully engaged.

[0009] These and other objects of the present invention are achieved by a resilient clip ring which includes an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall. The outer wall has a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots.

[0010] The foregoing and other objects of the present invention are achieved by a resilient clip ring which includes an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall. The outer wall has a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots. The body has a first end circumferentially spaced from a second end. The first end and the second edge are brought into contact when the clip ring is inserted into a groove.

[0011] Still other objects and advantages of the present invention will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description, wherein the preferred embodiments of the invention are shown and described, simply by way of illustration of the best mode contemplated of carrying out the invention. As will be realized, the invention is capable of other and different embodiments, and its several details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects, all without departing from the invention. Accordingly, the drawings and description thereof are to be regarded as illustrative in nature, and not as restrictive.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0012] The present invention is illustrated by way of example, and not by limitation, in the figures of the accompanying drawings, wherein elements having the same reference numeral designations represent like elements throughout and wherein:

Figure 1A is a top view of a prior art clip ring;
Figure 1B is cross-sectional view taken along lines 1B-1B of Figure 1A depicting a cross-sectional view of the clip ring;

Figure 2 is a top plan view of a clip ring according to the present invention;

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 3-3 in Figure 2; and

Figure 4 is a bottom perspective view of the clip ring according to the present invention;

Figure 5 is a side elevational view of an exemplary electrical connector in an uncoupled condition which is usable with the inventive clip ring of the present invention; and

Figure 6 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 6-6 in Figure 5 within the electrical connector in a coupled condition.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

[0013] Referring first to Figure 2, a bottom plan view of a clip ring 30 according to the present invention is depicted. The clip ring 30 includes an annular body 40 having an outer surface 45 and an inner surface 50. A first edge 52 and a second edge 54 are circumferentially spaced from each other and form a gap g. As depicted in Figure 2, seven slots extend from outer wall 45 and are equally circumferentially spaced. The seven slots 60-72 and the gap g essentially form eight weak areas in the body 40 thereby providing flexibility to the clip ring 30. The slots 60-72 and the gap g are equally circumferentially spaced. Slots 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72 extend inwardly from the outer wall 45 and terminate before inner wall 50.

[0014] As depicted in Figure 3, clip ring 30 has an inner section 80 and outer fingers 82 formed between each of the inwardly extending slots. Although seven slots are depicted, any number of slots can be used. As should be understood, the more slots that are used the lower the insertion forces would be for any given material thickness and the fewer slots that are used for any given material thickness will increase insertion withdrawal forces. Each of the fingers 82 has a first rounded section 90 which connects the finger 82 to the inner wall 80, a front ramp section 92 and a rear ramp section 94.

[0015] As depicted in Figure 4, the rear ramp section 94 is spaced from the inner wall 80. Referring back to Figure 3, front ramp section 92 and rear ramp section 94 meet at a knuckle portion 96.

[0016] As depicted in Figure 5, the clip ring 30 is positioned in a groove 110 in a male connector 120 for mating with a female connector 125. The components of the male connector 120 and the female connector 125 are not described herein as they form no part of the present invention. It should be appreciated that the clip ring 30 according to the present invention is usable on any type of male/female connector which are mated in a push/pull manner. In operation, when one connector is being inserted into the other, front ramp section 92 will make contact with a lead in ramp 130 on the female connector 125, the outer diameter of the female connector 125, thereby causing the outer section 82 to flex radially in-

wardly. That is, rear section 94 will be brought nearer to inner wall 80. The knuckle portion 96 will be brought into contact with the inner diameter 140 of the female connector 125. Upon full insertion into the groove, the portion 82 will flex radially outwardly and be in full engagement with the inner diameter 140. Most preferably, the inner diameter 140 will have a curved shape as depicted in Figure 6. The shape of the curved surface should be such that rear ramp section 94 is in contact with the curved surface when the clip ring 30 is fully inserted into the female connector 125. The shape of the curved surface will help retain the clip ring 30 in the curved surface.

[0017] As should be appreciated, the clip ring 30 of the present invention will fully engage the outside diameter of the male retaining groove and the inside diameter of the female retaining groove simultaneously. Further, upon insertion of the clip ring into the groove, the gap will be closed and surfaces 52 and 54 will be brought into contact with each other. This eliminates the potential for discontinuities in the ground circuit in a vibrational environment. In addition, the insertion and withdrawal forces can be tuned to a greater degree by varying the material thickness and the beam length of the fingers 82.

[0018] It will be readily seen by one of ordinary skill in the art that the present invention fulfills all of the objects set forth above. After reading the foregoing specification, one of ordinary skill will be able to affect various changes, substitutions of equivalents and various other aspects of the invention as broadly disclosed herein. It is therefore intended that the protection granted hereon be limited only by the definition contained in the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

Claims

1. A resilient electrically conductive clip ring, comprising:
 - an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall;
 - said outer wall having a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots extending substantially through the whole entirety of said outer wall, thereby rendering said outer wall operatively elastically flexible radially inwardly toward said inner wall.
2. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said body has a first end circumferentially spaced from a second end and wherein said first end and said second end are adapted to be brought into contact.
3. The resilient clip ring of claim 3, wherein said body extends circumferentially for a full 360°.
4. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said outer wall has a first section extending from an edge of

said inner wall and a second section extending from an edge of said first section.

5. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said outer wall has a plurality of radially outwardly extending fingers. 5
6. The resilient clip ring of claim 4, wherein said first section is a ramp extending radially away from said inner wall. 10
7. The resilient clip ring of claim 4, wherein said second section is a ramp extending radially toward said inner wall. 15
8. (Deleted)
9. (Deleted)
10. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said body is made of beryllium copper. 20
11. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said clip ring is integrally formed.
12. A resilient electrically conductive clip ring for connecting a male connector with a mating female connector, said clip ring comprising:
 - an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall; 30
 - said inner wall forming an electrical contact with an outside diameter of said male connector when said clip ring is positioned on said male connector;
 - said outer wall having a convex shape including a first section extending from an edge of said inner wall, a knuckle portion extending from an edge of said first section, and a second section extending from an edge of said knuckle portion, wherein said outer wall being operatively elastically flexible radially inwardly toward said inner wall and said knuckle portion forming an electrical contact with an inner diameter of said female connector when said clip ring is introduced into said female connector. 45
13. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said body extends circumferentially for a full 360°. 50
14. (Deleted)
15. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said outer wall has a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots and a plurality of radially outwardly extending fingers formed therebetween. 55
16. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said first

section is angled to form a lead in section when said clip ring is introduced into said female connector.

17. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said second section is angled to form a lead out section when said clip ring is withdrawn from said female connector.
18. (Deleted)
19. (Deleted)
20. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said body is made of beryllium copper.
21. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said clip ring is integrally formed.
22. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said body has a first end circumferentially spaced from a second end and wherein said first end and said second edge are brought into contact when said clip ring is inserted into said female connector.
23. The resilient clip ring of claim 1, wherein said body has a substantially U-shaped cross-section.
24. The resilient clip ring of claim 12, wherein said body has a substantially U-shaped cross-section.
25. The resilient clip ring of claim 16, wherein said lead in section is a ramp.
26. The resilient clip ring of claim 17, wherein said lead out section is a ramp.
27. The resilient clip ring of claim 15, wherein said slots extend substantially through the whole entirety of said outer wall.
28. An electrical joint, comprising
 - a male electrical connector;
 - a mating female electrical connector; and
 - a resilient electrically conductive clip ring for electrically connecting an outer diameter of said male connector with an inner diameter of said female connector, said clip ring comprising:
 - an annular-shaped body having an inner wall and an outer wall;
 - said inner wall engaging said outer diameter of said male connector;
 - said outer wall having a plurality of circumferentially spaced slots and engaging said inner diameter of said female connector;

wherein said outer wall being operatively elastically flexible radially inwardly toward said inner wall when said clip ring is brought by said male connector into an interior of said female connector.

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29. The electrical joint of claim 28, wherein said plurality of circumferentially spaced slots extend substantially through the whole entirety of said outer wall.

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30. The electrical joint of claim 28, wherein said inner wall is positioned in a first groove formed in said outer diameter of said male connector.

31. The electrical joint of claim 28, wherein said outer wall is received within a second groove formed in said inner diameter of said female connector.

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32. The electrical joint of claim 31, wherein said outer wall includes a first section angled to form a lead-in section when said clip ring is inserted into said second groove, and a second section angled to form a lead-out section when said clip ring is removed from said second groove.

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33. The electrical joint of claim 28, wherein said inner wall and said outer wall fully engage said outer diameter of said male connector and said inner diameter of said female connector, respectively.

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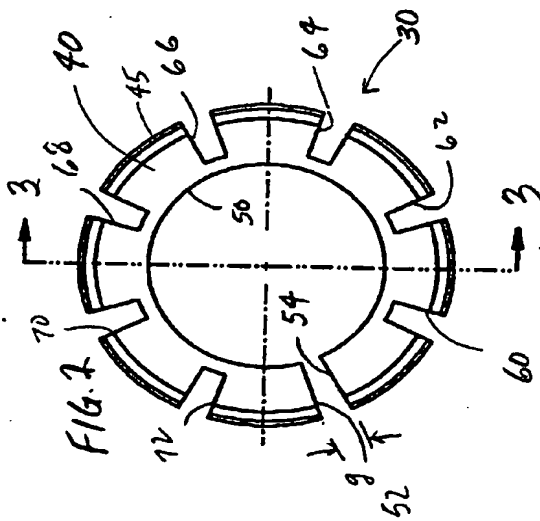
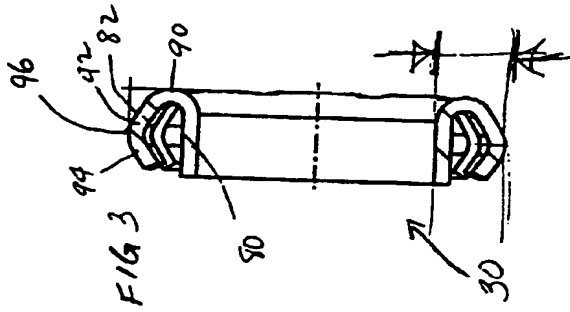
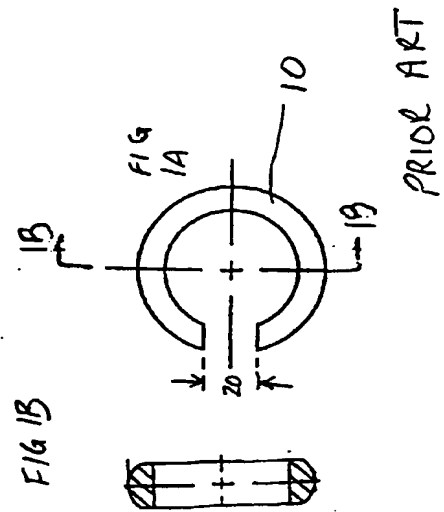
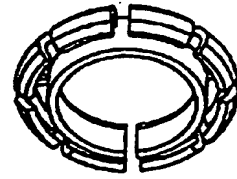
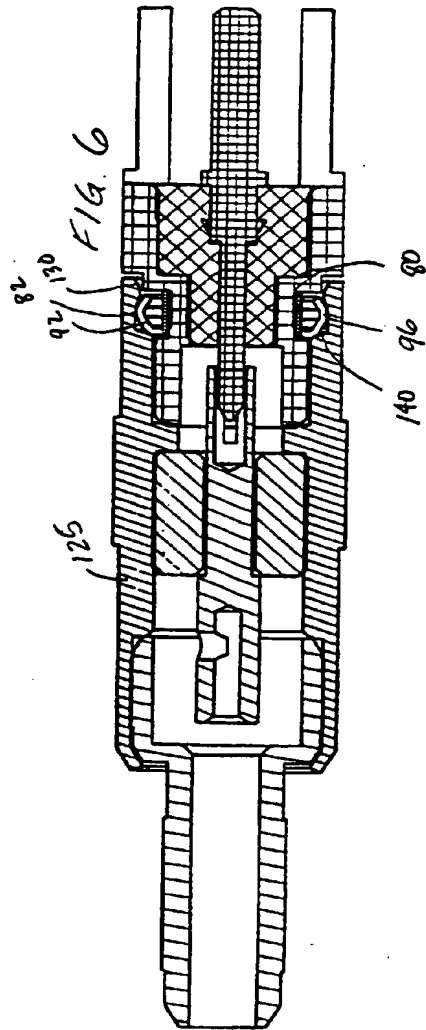
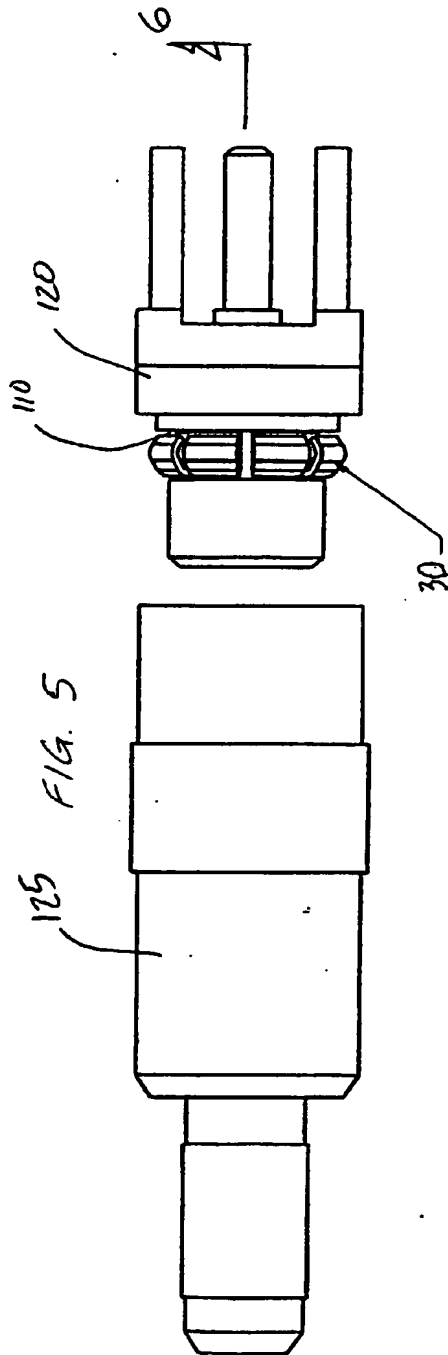


FIG. 4







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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 12 6995

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	FR 2 667 451 A (LB AIR) 3 April 1992 (1992-04-03) * page 2, line 1 - line 46; figures 1-4 *	1-15, 18-24, 27-31,33	H01R13/17
A	DE 544 104 C (VOIGT&HAEFFNER) 28 January 1932 (1932-01-28) * the whole document *	1-33	
A	US 5 898 993 A (MATSUMOTO MITSUHIRO ET AL) 4 May 1999 (1999-05-04) * column 4, line 49 - column 5, line 49; figure 8 *	1-33	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			H01R
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search BERLIN		Date of completion of the search 19 March 2001	Examiner Stirn, J-P
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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EP 00 12 6995

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